NOVACON 42

Progress Report 2

9–11 November 2012

Park Inn Hotel, Nottingham
9th – 11th November 2012

Guest of Honour: **Jaine Fenn**

Membership Rates

Adults: £40
13-16 years: £10 12 years and under free
Day rates will be available.

Hotel Rooms

Double or Twin: £43 pppn Single: £ 61 pppn
Children: under 5 years free, 5-14 years £5 pppn (ages at the date of the convention)

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It's summer and the weather hasn't quite realised that yet so it must be time for...

Novacon 42 Progress Report 2

Short stories are something of a theme in this issue. You can find a list of Jaine Fenn's short stories and the web links to three of them that you can download to read before the convention. Yvonne expounds her thoughts on why you should be reading short stories and gives a handy guide as to where you can find lots of short fiction for FREE! Yes get your e-reader out and fill it at no cost.

Hotel Booking Form

Those of you who haven't booked your hotel room should find a booking form included with this PR and, if you receive this by post, your address label should show your status. So come on get that form out and book now. Lost your form? There's one on the website for you to download. No excuses – do it!

Novacon on the Internet

In addtion to the website we are promoting Novacon through the social media pages of Facebook and Twitter. Richard and Helena have been regularly posting this year. So check out our Facebook page for daily updated content from science fiction, media and fandom. Feel free to post messages or queries on our wall and we'll get back to you.

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Acknowledgements

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Chairman's Piece

Tony Berry

Hello and welcome to Progress Report 2. OK, that's it, I'm done now. Ah, OK then….

Things are progressing in an orderly fashion, the programme is looking good, the hotel is being beaten into submission, the committee is working like a well-oiled machine, and some of what I just said may be true.

One thing we have decided to change this year is the time and location of the Book Auction. Although Novacon puts the emphasis on SF as literature and the Auction is a part of that, there is no doubt that it doesn't attract as many people to it as it used to. Last year there was a second auction held later in the evening in the downstairs bar. It proved to be quite popular and so this year the Book Auction will not be on the main programme, which of course frees up a spot for another item.

The Art Auction is also an important part of the convention, and we think it would be a good idea to have more previously-owned work on display to increase the number and variety of pieces on which you can blow all your money. Too many pictures and not enough wallspace? Why not bring them along and see if you can sell them? Apart from this, we aim to be running more stuff "off piste" in the rooms on the lower ground floor – more details nearer the time.

Included with this PR is a Hotel Form, so if you haven't already downloaded one from the website, please fill it in and return it to Steve as soon as possible. Remember a deposit is not required, but tell the hotel if you intend to arrive after 4pm on the Friday of the con so that they hold your room for you.

John Jarrold was Jaine Fenn's literary agent for her earlier novels, so who better to give us his opinion of her as a writer.

(For more information on John's Literary Agency see www.johnjarrold.co.uk)

A Phenomenally Good Writer

John Jarrold

Jaine Fenn is a phenomenally good writer. The worlds and characters she creates live in the mind, long after one has finished reading her novels.

Jaine is also a true fan. She studied Linguistics and Astronomy at the University of Hertfordshire, where she became the president of PSiFA (the local student Science Fiction society) from 1984-1985. She also helped organised Shoestringcons and edited their newsletter/fanzine, Hypo-Space. Like other authors including Robert Holdstock and Charles Stross, she hung out at cons (as she still does, obviously!) for years before getting her first story published in 1999. It was followed by several more through the first decade of the century, appearing in places ranging from SF anthologies to Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine.

Her first SF novel, PRINCIPLES OF ANGELS, appeared from Gollancz in 2008. It was highly praised and compared to genre classics including Iain M Banks, though her voice is totally her own.

Four more books in her Hidden Empire series have followed – the latest, QUEEN OF NOWHERE, comes out in November 2012.

Hugely enthusiastic, interested in everything and a good egg. Welcome Jaine to Novacon, as one of the best British SF writers of the twenty-first century and a great convention panellist and talker. And read her novels – you won't regret it.

The Short Stories of Jaine Fenn

The following list has been unashamedly lifted from Jaine's own website (www.jainefenn.com). Three of them are available on the web and their URLs are noted next to the story.

Thirteen stories in all – now that's enough for a short story collection I would have thought (hint to publishers).

'Raw Steak and Roses' appeared in 'Divas of Darkness' in November 1999

'The Path to the Sun' appeared in 'On Spec' and 'Would That It Were' in January 2002

'The Chatterslee Circle' appeared in 'Fortean Bureau' in July 2003

'Paying For Rain' appeared in 'Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine' in August 2004

'Death on Elsewhere Street' appeared in 'Shadows of Saturn' in April 2005

'Fear Not Heaven's Fire' appeared in 'Greatest Uncommon Denominator Magazine' in June 2007 (www.gudmagazine.com/vault/1)

'The Prettiest Star' appeared in 'Escape Velocity' in November 2007

'Collateral Damage' appeared in 'Subterfuge' in October 2008

'High Ground' appeared in 'Sci-Phi' in May 2009

'Angel Dust' appeared in 'Labyrinth Inhabitant' in May 2009

(www.labyrinthinhabitant.com/?p=141)

'A Mirror to Life' appeared in 'DayBreak' (the 'Shine' anthology webzine) in May 2010. (daybreakmagazine.wordpress.com/2010/05/01/daybreak-fiction-a-mirror-to-life/)

'King of Pain' appeared in Aoife's Kiss in March 2010

'Twilight at the Change House' appeared in 'End of an Aeon' in July 2011

In addition to the above Novacon is publishing a new novelette for the convention in our usual limited, numbered edition format only available to convention members.

What's Happening at Novacon 42

A Programme For Austerity Fandom

Dave Hicks

Well, what were you expecting anyway when the rating agencies have words like 'poor' and 'moody' in their names?

With the Groat downgraded to a triple z rating, none of us getting a pay rise if we've still got a job and 97% of con budgets going on publications since the rise in postal charges, fandom faces a crisis.

Costs must be controlled. Words like 'rationalise' and 'lean' begin to appear in committee discussions as "PA system" is deleted and replaced with 'talk louder'; 'multimedia extravaganza' with 'scratchy Betamax copy of Plan 9 for Outer Space' and 'sparkling programme' with 'Ian Sorensen's pop quiz about No 1s at Novacon through the ages'. [*We're actually doing that one! ED*]

Yet in the midst of this our nation (and Boris Johnson) wants to bring a fabulously expensive international extravaganza to London. Yes, indeed, we may remark on the soon to be all-consuming LONDON 2014. No, they haven't *officially* won at the time of writing but by November we'll know and may wish to remark on it.

We'll be looking at short stories on account of how no-one can afford to buy entire novels any more, or perhaps because SF is the place where the short form continues to thrive and delight.

Since such transactions for money that still occur in our shattered, soon-to-return-to-shiny-bead-based-bartering economy we'll be moving the book auction underground to the downstairs bar where sod's law dictates it'll be the best supported one we've had in years.

Science Fiction and even fandom themselves are probably some sort of tax dodge. For who? We don't know, but with the recent revelations about tax avoidance and allowance schemes, such as the fact that a hundred grand invested in, say, LESBIAN VAMPIRE KILLERS, could have yielded a tax break *six times* larger surely Explains Things, and confirms the need to discuss conspiracies and paranoia.

Does all this have a real effect on SF and fandom? Money still circulates as Joss Whedon, Ridley Scott or Jeff Bezos might comment but we'll consider whether there's real 'austerity' in our community now, and what it might mean for fandom in the next few years.

This stuff isn't just thrown together you know [*Honestly? ED*]. I have about nine web sites and docs open at once. I encounter the phrases: 'self-delusion, secrets and betrayal'; 'primitive theocracy' and 'lonely and unstable genius' and realise that I'm not reading the committee minutes but about the plots of novels by our fine Guest of Honour, Jaine Fenn.

We'll have Jaine on stage at least once a day, and as key attraction on Saturday afternoon. We're not the kind of convention that puts authors on three panels in four hours (I've seen it done – I'll never forget the wasted look in XXX's eyes afterwards) but we are the kind of convention where you can talk to them at the bar.

Jaine's latest novel QUEEN OF NOWHERE is due for release later this year. [*Be good if it was around Novacon time, eh? ED*], the fifth in a cylce of linked but self contained novels that began with PRINCIPLES OF ANGELS. Jaine has blogged that she's looking forward to Novacon, as are we all.

Short Stories for FREE!

Yvonne Rowse

I know that this is controversial but I'm going to suggest those of you who are interested do a bit of prep before Novacon. Don't worry. You've plenty of time.

I have been whining for quite some time now about not having enough time to read anything other than deeply depressing blogs and work related journals. I just don't have either the time or the emotional commitment to give to a novel. I read Game of Thrones before, during and after Eastercon. It seemed like a huge commitment and left me exhausted. Unfortunately, that brief foray into a proper book led me into an extended engagement with novels by Gail Carriger, Tanya Huff, Theresa Thomlinson, Helen Flint and Michaela Roessner and that left me with reports to write and presentations to develop and no work time

available. I had to buckle down and get some actual real work done but I'd redeveloped a need for fiction so I did what I usually do in these circumstances and diverted into kid's books and short stories.

This is not to imply that short stories (or kids books) are any less worthy than novels. In many ways they are much better. At their best they are quick to read and leave you breathless and unready to leave that world behind. This is excellent from a work point of view as I am then immune to the lure of other stories for a short time and end up writing the hideously overdue report.

My problem with short stories over the years has had much to do with a reluctance to buy magazines. Magazines (not fanzines – that's very different!) are untidy and full of other stuff that I'm not interested in. This attitude is rather unfortunate as the majority of short stories are, at least initially, published in magazines. The thing is, even if I bought a magazine containing a marvellous story it would probably get thrown out sooner or later. I like my reading matter in book format.

This prejudice has led me to buying a fair number of anthologies over the years, tracking down elusive stories by favourite authors. Some of my new favourite authors have been introduced to me in this manner; as a cheapskate I am not going to spend all that money for a book and not read the rest of the stories.

I've also developed something of a fondness for linked short stories. The Bordertown shared universe has amused me and one of my favourite surprise buys was a book called 'The Touch', a collection of powerful stories about people whose touch, often inadvertently, disables. The 'Mountains of Mourning' is a book that I never leave out when obsessively ploughing through the Miles Vorkosigan universe although I do read the stories in strict date order. The biggest block of books on my expensive hardback books shelves is the complete short stories of Theodore Sturgeon. The thing in common with all these acceptable instances of short stories is that they have something in common. The author, the characters, the universe, whatever.

You can imagine ... I never go looking for anthologies of short stories. When I buy them it is because I have to or on the very occasional whim. I don't want to have lots of short stories by different authors jostling with

one another, I want each perfectly polished gem to be served up to me separately, except not in a tiny little chapbook that'll get lost on the shelves.

So lately there has been a new source. Sometime in 2008 Tor.com started making short stories available. For free. You have to register with them but given who else knows my online details this doesn't seem to be a major issue. They send me a regular email which occasionally has a link to a new short story. I rarely read them straight away. Usually I squirrel them away on my computer and pick one or two up when I'm on a train or similarly bored.

I had imagined that the purpose of this amazing generosity was to act as a sort of loss leader – that having read Six Months and Three Days I would go looking for whole novels by Charlie Jane Anders and I might well. I begin to suspect it might also be the thin edge of the wedge where reading books electronically became acceptable. I'm not sure, but having read so many short stories on my computer I recently downloaded and read Cryoburn, my first full length novel. I will, of course, now dutifully buy the book because I still prefer the paper, but I probably would never have considered it in the past.

But this suspicion is beside the point. What this gives us, for the first time, is access to a pool of short fiction that any of us with computers can read.

What I am going to suggest is that those of us who are interested should have a look at the websites below and pick out a story that you really like to give us a common pool of stories to discuss at Novacon. I am giving you the link to the Tor website where, as I said, you can sign up to receive access to free short stories, a series of links to each of the Hogo nominated short stories and links to three of my favourite short stories on the Tor site. If anyone wants to tweet a link to any story feel free. We will collate all suggestions before the next PR.

http://www.tor.com/stories

http://clarkesworldmagazine.com/yu_04_11/

http://www.asimovs.com/2012_06/pdfs/TheHomecoming_MikeResnick.pdf

http://www.nancyfulda.com/movement-a-short-story-about-autism-in-the-future

http://a1018.g.akamai.net/f/1018/19022/1d/randomhouse1.download.akamai.com/19022/pdf/Paper_Menagerie.pdf

http://www.tor.com/stories/2011/04/the-shadow-war-of-the-night-dragons-book-one-the-dead-city-excerpt

http://www.tor.com/stories/2011/06/six-months-three-days
(Hugo nominated novella)

http://www.tor.com/stories/2012/05/dress-your-marines-in-white

(Other websites are available)

Miscellany

Art Show

You don't have to be an artist to exhibit in the artshow. We are actively encouaging owners of artwork to bring it along for display and, if you wish to sell it, put it in the art auction.

Members looking to exhibit work (for auction or otherwise) should contact Serena Culfeather soon: serena@ravensquill.org

Dealer's Room

As in previous years, this will be in the large room next to the bar! £20 per 6ft table for the weekend and you have to be a member of the convention to book space. Interested dealers should contact Tony Berry: morbius@altair-4.co.uk

Parents' co-op

As usual Novacon will not be operating a crèche but we will be setting aside a room for smaller children to play under parental supervision if there is sufficient demand. If you're interested let us know as soon as possible.

Food and drink

Again as usual, and whenever Tony has any say in the matter, there will be real ale and a good cider provided in the bar, plus a range of snacks and meals throughout the weekend. (And Eve & Yvonne will attempt to ensure there is acceptable wine!)

2012 Nova Awards

Steve Green

There's been a great deal of discussion in recent years – not least in the pages of past Novacon progress reports – about the current state of fanzines and its effect upon that venerable institution, the Nova Awards.

We've pretty much reached a make-or-break moment here. Eligibility has been extended to Irish fanzines and e-zines, voting is now open to any UK or Irish fan who's read at least six individual titles (relatively easy now so many are available online, particularly at *eFanzines.com*) and an electronic version of the ballot form will be launched at the Novacon website on 1 October. If the number of fans taking part this year doesn't show a significant increase, there's really little point in the awards continuing.

In the meantime, might I suggest we take a leaf from the internationally popular 'contest' NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month) and consider September as its fanzine equivalent? Any UK or Irish fanzine distributed by 30 September qualifies, so this is an ideal opportunity for any of you who've always longed to get into print – or used to produce a fanzine, or haven't quite got around to getting the latest issue out – to get into the publishing groove. Just make sure you drop me a line at

stevegreen@livejournal.com

to ensure it's included in the 'Nova Awards longlist' we maintain on the Novacon website.

The **Birmingham Science Fiction Group** was founded in 1971 to enable local and not so local fans to get together to discuss science fiction and related topics.

We meet on the second Friday of every month, 7:45pm at the Briar Rose Hotel on Bennett's Hill in Birmingham, just 5 minutes walk from New Street Station and handy for all bus routes. We usually start the evening with a guest speaker, often a professional in the field such as Brian Aldiss, Terry Pratchett or Peter Hamilton.

If you live anywhere in or around the West Midlands, the BSFG is the group for you! For further information, and a copy of our monthly newsletter, please:

Email: **bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk**

Visit our website: **www.birminghamsfgroup.org.uk**

Novacon 42 Membership

as at 14 June 2012 (Total number 150)

1	Jaine Fenn
2	Dave Weddell
28	½r
31	Michael Abbott
6	Brian Aldiss
87	Brian Ameringen
88	Meriol Ameringen
115	Jim Anderson
141	Tina Anghelatos
109	Margaret Austin
22	Simon Baldin
5	Iain M Banks
17	Barbara-Jane
140	Jacey Bedford
144	Doug Bell
41	Alan Bellingham
124	Austin Benson
8	Tony Berry
9	Helena Bowles
72	Claire Brialey
105	Ian Brown
26	Vernon Brown
27	Pat Brown
150	Alison Buck
142	Peter Buck
129	Charlotte Bulmer
145	Randy Byers
59	Steven Cain
61	Jonathan Cain
60	Marianne Cain
62	David Carlile
10	Cat Coast
133	Steve Cooper
49	Dave Cox
100	Margaret Croad
106	Helen Cross
20	Julia Daly
89	Michael Davidson
90	Christine Davidson
107	Steve Davies
30	Malcolm Davies
43	Simon Dearn
108	Giulia DeCesare
111	Theresa Derwin
85	Paul Dormer
127	Stephen Dunn
128	Roger Earnshaw
110	Martin Easterbrook
57	Sue Edwards
84	Janet Edwards
83	John Edwards
94	Flick
149	Mike French
96	Gwen Funnell
78	Ron Gemmell
65	Niall Gordon
112	Steve Green
148	Susan Griffiths
136	David Haddock
19	Dave Hardy
7	Harry Harrison
139	Peter Harrow
116	Fiona Harvey
12	John Harvey
11	Eve Harvey
56	Julian Headlong
117	Dave Hicks
118	Penny Hicks
38	Martin Hoare
25	Dave Holmes
23	Dave Hutchinson
24	Bogna Hutchinson

104	Rob Jackson
120	Janet Jenkins
119	Andy Jenkins
36	Al Johnston
39	Sue Jones
47	Tim Kirk
143	Christina Lake
37	Dave Lally
97	Dave Langford
13	Steve Lawson
33	Peter Mabey
135	Dave Mansfield
34	Rory McLean
3	John Meaney
4	Yvonne Meaney
92	Michael Meara
91	Pat Meara
64	Chris Morgan
63	Pauline Morgan
131	John Mottershead
122	Jim Mowatt
123	Carrie Mowatt
86	Caroline Mullan
126	Anthony Naggs
82	James Odell
51	Omega
121	Morag O'Neill
130	Charles Partington
68	Andrew Patton
53	Jodie Payne
52	Hal Payne
50	Harry Payne
71	Mali Perera
114	Rog Peyton
101	Greg Pickersgill
102	Catherine Pickersgill
73	Mark Plummer
40	Colette Reap
42	Roger Robinson
98	Tony Rogers
15	Yvonne Rowse
58	Alison Scott
134	Jamie Scott
16	Mike Scott
93	Harpal Singh
44	Martin Smart
35	Robert Smith
45	Melica Smith
54	Adrian Snowdon
29	Kate Solomon
55	Ian Sorensen
103	Douglas Spencer
14	Richard Standage
18	Tim Stannard
76	Chris Stocks
77	Neil Summerfield
81	Calvin Ternent
79	George Ternent
80	Linda Ternent
69	Markus Thierstein
99	David Thomas
132	Sue Thomason
75	Alison Tomkinson
74	Neil Tomkinson
48	Dave Tompkins
113	Heloise Tudor
46	Jim Walker
95	Peter Wareham
70	Gerry Webb
137	Alan Webb
147	Ian Whates
21	Bridget Wilkinson
138	Peter Wilkinson
32	Anne Wilson
125	Caro Wilson
146	Ellie Winpenny
66	Anne Woodford
67	Alan Woodford

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